

## **RAHAB AND THE TWO SPIES**

Read the story of Rahab in Joshua 2. Where else is Rahab mentioned in Scripture? See Joshua 6:17,22-25; Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chronicles 2:9-15; Matthew 1:4,5; Luke 3:32; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25. Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute (she may have been connected to a fertility cult religion of the day) who lived in Jericho in the days of Joshua and the conquest of that city. Consider the implications of this story from the perspective of each of the participants:

### **Rahab:**

Were Rahab and all her family saved because she lied so well? (See Hebrews 11:31)

How many of the people who ended up on Hebrews 11 are specifically recorded in other parts of the Scripture as lying?

(Abraham [Genesis 12:13; 20:2]; Sarah [Genesis 18:9-15]; Isaac [Genesis 26:6]; Jacob [Genesis 27:18-29]; Moses [Exodus 4:18; 5:3]; Rahab [Joshua 2:4,5])

What does Rahab's testimony to the spies tell us about her?

Does this mean that we can practice "situation ethics" and lie when the circumstances seem to call for it?

Why did a very prominent leader from the tribe of Judah (Salmon) marry her?

Why did Paul (God?) put Rahab in Hebrews 11?

Why did James put Rahab in James 2:25?

Why was she mentioned by name in Matthew 1:5?

She could very easily have decided to tell the truth to preserve her own life. If the soldiers had forced their way past her and done a search of the house, what would they have done with the spies and with Rahab? Lot told the truth at his door in Sodom. Genesis 19:4-11. Rahab lied at her door. Who was the better person?

Was Rahab put into Hebrews 11 because, by chance, she married into the right family and therefore by accident became an ancestor of Christ? If she was nothing more than a "black sheep" in her family, why is she mentioned so frequently in Scripture? People usually try to keep quiet about their "black sheep!" Rahab is mentioned twice in ways that suggest that her faith was somehow on a *par* with Abraham who was the greatest example of faith in Scripture! (See Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25)

Was Rahab included in Hebrews 11 because she raised such a great son—Boaz—who was a real gentleman? What do you think she said to her son about her earlier life in Jericho? Boaz was noteworthy in a time of idolatry and immorality. As he came to work in the fields in the morning he said to his workers, "The Lord be with you!" (Ruth 2:4) Was Rahab featured in the Scriptures to suggest to us the importance of the work of mothers?

Have you thanked God in prayer for the record of Rahab in the Bible? (See Joshua 2:1-24; 6:17,25)

Was Rahab's life saved and featured in Hebrews 11 because her intentions were good? (See Ellen White below)

On what basis did Rahab decide to trust the spies, and their God, with her future welfare?

How did Rahab become a prostitute? She may have been sold into it. Some families in those days sold daughters to pay off their debts. She may have been dedicated to it as a "cult prostitute". As a "cult prostitute" she would work in the "temple" of a heathen "god" and serve the "worshippers" who came there. It is also possible that Rahab was a "prostitute" because that was one way she attracted business for her "inn". What do you think the soldiers who came to Rahab's home knew about her? Had they ever been to her "inn" before?

Since there is no evidence of any such thing as a hotel in Rahab's day and Jericho was a major center for traffic from Egypt to Mesopotamia and the kingdom of the Hittites, might Rahab's "Inn" have been the natural place for "strangers" to gather for the night? Where did these visitors usually stay? Compare Genesis 19:1-3 and Judges 19:10-21.

### **Spies:**

Were the spies engaged in a very "honest" work?

Were they telling people the truth about what they were doing?

What did the spies expect to happen when they entered Rahab's place?

What did they say to Rahab?

Were they honest with her about who they were?

She apparently found out fairly quickly. Did God somehow reveal this to her? If Rahab lived in the wall, (actually between the inner and outer walls) of Jericho her house could not have been very large. Probably the only possible place to hide was on the roof. This was spring time and that meant harvest time for the flax. Rahab no doubt had the roof quite covered with drying flax. Hiding in the midst of large stacks of flax would be relatively easy. If you had been one of the spies, lying under the flax on the roof, what would you be praying? Maybe "Help me not to move!" or "Help me not to sneeze!" Were they supposed to be "fighting their way into Canaan?" If they had allowed God to conquer the land for them, would they have needed to spy?

Should Rahab and the spies have agreed that they would trust God enough to tell the truth at all times and allow Yahweh to take care of them? If so, why bother to hide! Shouldn't they have stood in the doorway and greeted the soldiers!

Why did they enter Rahab's "Inn" to begin with? Were they looking quickly for a place to hide? Or did they think that perhaps she might be a good source of information about the place? How long do you think it took Rahab to discover the true identity of the spies? How did she know who they were?

### **God:**

If you were God looking down on all of this, what would you do? Is any of this story evidence of God's ideal for the behavior of His children?

Is God trying to say anything important to us through all of this? Jesus tells us to be as "wise as serpents, but as harmless as doves". (Matthew 10:16) Isn't the serpent or snake regarded as a very deceptive creature? Why would Jesus use this illustration?

Is there any place in this whole story where God speaks and commends any of the participants on their behavior? Was Rahab congratulated by God for lying well?

There are many stories in the Bible about which God appears to make no comment other

than helping his prophets and apostles to record them as they actually happened. How often even in the New Testament does God comment on the events that take place? When Paul rebuked Peter to his face in public did God comment? (See Galatians 2:11-14; compare 2 Peter 3:15,16) Do any of these stories include instructions that we should follow them as our example? (Compare 1 Corinthians 10:6,11)

In light of God's placing Rahab, Jephthah, Samson, and Gideon in Hebrews 11 aren't you glad that He is the one doing the judging in the end? If we are lost despite a God who is as gracious as this, there truly is no redeeming factor in our lives! Not only that, the story of the prodigal son suggests that when God accepts us back, He treats us as if we had never sinned—He takes us back 100%! (See Luke 15:11-32)

What does this story teach us about God? Was Satan involved in any way? What was Satan doing as the spies entered Rahab's place?

Notice some of the interesting ideas of other commentators about Rahab:

"Rahab's name comes from a root meaning "to be wide or broad." It appears to be the shortened form of a theophoric name (cf., for example, Rehabiah, 1 Chr 23:17; 24:21). The exact nature of Rahab's occupation has been the subject of considerable controversy. Most interpreters now see her as a "secular" prostitute without any cultic or sacred connections. Not only is this in keeping with the biblical description, but there was a Hebrew term (*qēdešâ*) available to the author had he wanted to highlight her status as a "sacred" prostitute. The use of the term "innkeeper" in certain Jewish traditions may be seen as an attempt to improve upon her professional standing, but that is not necessarily the case." (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*)

RAHAB:

[RAYhab] (spacious)-- a harlot of Jericho who hid two Hebrew spies, helping them to escape, and who became an ancestor of David and Jesus (Joshua 2:1-21; 6:17-25; Matthew 1:5). Rahab's house was on the city wall of Jericho. Rahab, who manufactured and dyed linen, secretly housed the two spies whom Joshua sent to explore Jericho and helped them escape by hiding them in stalks of flax on her roof (Joshua 2:6).

Rahab sent the king's messengers on a false trail, and then let the two spies down the outside wall by a rope through the window of her house (Joshua 2:15). When the Israelites captured Jericho, they spared the house with the scarlet cord in the window—a sign that a friend of God's people lived within. Rahab, therefore, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all her father's household, was spared. Apparently she and her family were later brought into the nation of Israel.

Matthew refers to Rahab as the wife of Salmon (Ruth 4:20-21; Matthew 1:4-5; Luke 3:32); (Salma in 1 Chronicles 2:11). Their son Boaz married Ruth and became the father of Obed, the grandfather of Jesse, and the great-grandfather of David. Thus, a Canaanite harlot became part of the lineage of King David out of which the Messiah came (Matthew 1:5);

(Rachab, KJV)-- perhaps an early sign that God's grace and forgiveness is extended to all, that it is not limited by nationality or the nature of a person's sins.

The Scriptures do not tell us how Rahab, who came out of a culture where harlotry and idolatry were acceptable, recognized Jehovah as the one true God. But her insights recorded

in (Joshua 2:9-11) leave no doubt that she did so. This Canaanite woman's declaration of faith led the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews to cite Rahab as one of the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:31), while James commended her as an example of one who has been justified by works (James 2:25).

According to rabbinic tradition, Rahab was one of the four most beautiful women in the world and was the ancestor of eight prophets, including Jeremiah and the prophetess Huldah. (from *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Ellen White:

*The Signs of the Times*, June 16, 1890

"When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and he makes up for the deficiency with his own divine merit." (*TMK* 229; *Faith and Works* 50; *MLT* 250; *1SM* 382)

*The Desire of Ages* 638

"Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. Even among the heathen are those who have cherished the spirit of kindness; before the words of life had fallen upon their ears, they have befriended the missionaries, even ministering to them at the peril of their own lives. **Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God.**"

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